



COVID-19 vaccines are available in North Carolina to everyone ages 6 months and older.

- COVID-19 vaccines are free everywhere in North Carolina.
- No government ID or insurance is required.
- Depending on where you get your vaccine or booster, you may need to make an appointment.
- Everyone can be vaccinated and boosted, regardless of their immigration status. Getting vaccinated and boosted will not affect your immigration status.

To find a vaccine provider near you, visit MySpot.nc.gov.

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GETTING YOUR VACCINE AND STAYING UP TO DATE ON SHOTS

Do I need an ID card to get a vaccine?

You do not need an ID card, like a driver's license, to get a vaccine. You cannot be turned away if you don't have an ID. Vaccine providers can use other ways to make sure they are giving the vaccine to the right person. They may ask you to pre-register or fill out a form with your name, address, and date of birth. Or you may be asked to show a utility bill or other document with your name and address on it. You may be asked for your health insurance, but it's OK if you don't have it. Vaccines are always free.

Can I get a vaccine in a county I don't live in?

Yes. You can get a vaccine, including the updated vaccine that protects against variants, for free anywhere, no matter where you live. COVID-19 vaccines are currently free to everyone, regardless of insurance or immigration status. When federal funding ends, they will be available like flu shots and other routine vaccines and may no longer be free for everyone.

Can non-U.S. citizens get the vaccine?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are currently free to everyone. You don't need to have health insurance. Your immigration status or where you live do not matter, and you should not be asked about it. Your information is secure and can't be given to ICE for immigration enforcement. Getting the vaccine does not impact your immigration status. [Learn more from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#).

How much do the vaccines cost?

COVID-19 vaccines currently cost nothing. COVID-19 vaccines are currently free to everyone. You don't need to have health insurance. If you have health insurance, it will pay for 100% of any vaccine doses you get. If you don't have health insurance, you currently won't be charged for any vaccine doses. When federal funding ends, COVID-19 vaccines will be available like flu shots and other routine vaccines and may no longer be free for everyone.

Providers cannot currently deny you a vaccine because you can't pay or don't have health insurance. If you get a bill following your COVID-19 vaccine or booster, you should speak with the person or facility that sent it.

Are children able to get the vaccine?

Yes. Children ages 6 months and older should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Most children 6 months and older should also get the [updated vaccine](#) that helps protect against variants. The vaccine is currently available for free even without insurance and regardless of immigration status. Vaccines can help keep children from getting seriously sick even if they do get COVID-19. Vaccinating children can also help protect family members. This includes siblings who can't be vaccinated yet and family members who may be more likely to get very sick. Data on the COVID-19 vaccine in children has shown it works well and there are no safety concerns.

Children 12 to 17 Years: The Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for teens 12 to 17. People in this age group get the same dose as those who are 18 and older. Hundreds of thousands of children have received the vaccine. On October 12, 2022, the FDA authorized use of the updated vaccine that protects against COVID-19 variants for everyone 5 years and older.

Children 5 to 11 Years: The FDA authorized a smaller dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for children 5 to 11 years as well as a smaller dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for children 6 to 11 years. On October 12, 2022, the FDA authorized use of the updated vaccine that protects against COVID-19 variants for everyone 5 years and older.

Children 6 months through 4 years (through 5 years for Moderna): On June 17, 2022, the FDA authorized Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines for use in children 6 months through 5 years. The Pfizer vaccine was authorized for children ages 6 months through 4 years. The Moderna vaccine was authorized for children 6 months through 5 years. Parents and caregivers have a choice for vaccinating their young kids. On Dec. 9, 2022, the CDC authorized the updated vaccine that protects against COVID-19 variants for most children 6 months to 5 years.

The COVID-19 vaccine has been thoroughly tested in clinical trials with children 6 months and older. More than 9,000 children ages 6 months to 11 years participated in initial trials, which included volunteers from different races and ethnicities. There were no safety concerns or serious side effects noted in the ongoing clinical trials.

If your child tests positive for COVID-19 after their first shot, wait until their isolation period ends before getting the second shot (at least three weeks after the first dose). Kids over 12 years who do not have a weakened immune system can wait up to eight weeks for the second shot.

Ask your child's doctor if there are other vaccines your child might need to help keep them healthy.

Why should I get my teenager vaccinated?

COVID-19 vaccines can help our children get back to the fuller lives they had before the pandemic. The tested, safe, and effective COVID-19 vaccines are available for teens 12 and older. Getting vaccinated helps keep students and teachers in the classroom.

Young people can get the virus just like everyone else. In North Carolina, more than 575,000 children ages 0 to 17 years old have tested positive for COVID-19. Getting them vaccinated is the best way to protect them, prevent the spread of COVID-19, and protect others, including those around you who can't get vaccinated.

Millions of people have already received this vaccine. It is safe and works well in preventing serious illness, hospitalization, and death.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D88q-Yp55tw>

Is the vaccine safe for children and teenagers?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and works well in children and teens. Millions of children and teens in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history. Tens of millions of adults have also received the vaccine. Safety data from more than 298 million shots was collected in the first six months after the vaccines became available in the U.S. The data shows the most common side effects were mild and only lasted a few days.

Like adults, children and teens may have some temporary side effects from the vaccine. These may include a sore arm, feeling tired or achy for a day or two, headaches, or a fever. These are normal and good signs that their body is building protection. These symptoms should go away in a few days.

Parents and caregivers can enroll their child or teen in v-safe. V-safe is a free tool you can use on a smartphone for personalized health check-ins. Through v-safe, you can report any side effects your child or teenager may have after their vaccine.

There is no data that suggests COVID-19 vaccines affect unborn children or pregnancies.

Children and teens can get vaccines to help keep them safe from other illnesses at the same time as their COVID-19 vaccine.

Why should I get my younger child vaccinated?

Like teenagers, vaccines can help our children get back to fuller lives with healthier and happier experiences. Children can get the virus just like everyone else. COVID-19 cases in children can result in hospitalization, death, MIS-C (inflammation in different parts of the body), and long-term problems where symptoms can last for months. Recent research shows that vaccination lowers the chance of having these severe and long-term effects from COVID-19 infection.

New research has also shown that two shots of the smaller dose Pfizer vaccine lower the risk of MIS-C by 91%. Additionally, 95% of kids hospitalized with MIS-C are unvaccinated, and some require life support. They can also have lasting damage to the heart, kidneys, or other organs.

With the Omicron variant, COVID-19 cases reached their highest amount in children in the U.S. compared to earlier versions of the virus. This included large increases in hospitalizations across the country. One in four infants and young children who were hospitalized needed ICU care. Fortunately, kids who are 6 months and older can get the COVID-19 vaccine, and most kids who are 6 months and older can get the updated vaccine that protects against COVID-19 variants. The vaccines are safe and help protect young children from COVID-19. Getting younger kids vaccinated also helps protect others in the house who can't.

You cannot currently be charged for the vaccine. It is free, even if you don't have insurance and regardless of immigration status. Kids 6 months of age and older can get a vaccine anywhere that has the age-appropriate dose available.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NUTeqrZI48>

Which vaccine should my child under 6 years get?

The CDC recommends the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for children under 6 to help protect them from COVID-19.

Children 6 months through 4 years (including those who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems) should get three doses of the Pfizer vaccine, with the third dose being the updated vaccine that protects against COVID-19 variants. Children 6 months through 4 years should get two doses of the Moderna vaccine plus a dose of the updated vaccine. Children 5 to 11 years should get a two-dose vaccine plus the updated vaccine. Children 5 to 11 years who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems may need three initial

doses. This age group should also get the updated vaccine that protects against variants 2 months after their final initial series dose or an original booster.

Moderna and Pfizer continue to collect data on effectiveness, as well as the need for additional doses. Both vaccine brands are available for kids 6 months and up, and your family may have a choice. Talk to a medical provider to learn more about which option is right for your family.

Which vaccine did you get?	Vaccination schedule for most kids under 12.
Pfizer 6 months - 4 years	1st dose → 3 - 8 weeks → 2nd dose → 8+ weeks → Updated dose
Moderna 6 months - 4 years	1st dose → 4 - 8 weeks → 2nd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose
Pfizer 5 years - 11 years	1st dose → 3 - 8 weeks → 2nd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose
Moderna 5 years - 11 years	1st dose → 4 - 8 weeks → 2nd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose

Should I wait for the larger vaccine dose if my child is turning 5 soon?

No, do not wait. The effectiveness of the smaller dose for young children is comparable to the effectiveness of the larger dose for older children. You should get your child vaccinated as soon as possible.

What is the guidance for children under 12 who have compromised immune systems?

People over the age of 6 months who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems should get a three-dose vaccine series. In most cases, all three doses should be the same vaccine. Your health care provider will advise if a different vaccine type is appropriate.

Which vaccine did you get?	Vaccination schedule for moderately or severely immunocompromised kids under 12 ONLY.
Pfizer 6 months - 4 years	1st dose → 3 weeks → 2nd dose → 8+ weeks → Updated dose
Moderna 6 months - 4 years	1st dose → 4 weeks → 2nd dose → 4+ weeks → 3rd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose
Pfizer 5 years - 11 years	1st dose → 3 weeks → 2nd dose → 4+ weeks → 3rd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose
Moderna 5 years - 11 years	1st dose → 4 weeks → 2nd dose → 4+ weeks → 3rd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose

Can children get a mix of both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine for their doses?

COVID-19 vaccines are not interchangeable. Except under certain circumstances, children should get the same vaccine brand for all recommended doses. In the unusual case that a child gets two different brands of vaccines for the first two doses they should get a third dose of either vaccine eight weeks after their second to finish their initial vaccine series. Your vaccine provider can determine if a mixed series is appropriate for your child.

People 5 years and older can get a different product for their updated vaccine (if it is available to them based on their age) than they received for their initial series or last booster. Children 6 months to 4 years should get the same COVID-19 vaccine brand for all recommended doses.

Where can I find more guidance about back-to-school safety?

The updated [StrongSchoolsNC website](#) offers guidance from public health experts on how to keep our students safe in schools. Currently, the best tools we have are vaccines, masks, and getting tested. This guidance will be updated based on new research.

Do kids under 18 need their parent or guardian's permission to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

It depends. Anyone 15 years old or younger needs a parent or guardian's permission to get any COVID-19 vaccines. People who are 16 or 17 years old don't need permission to get the first two doses of the Pfizer vaccine, but they do need permission to get the updated vaccine dose that protects against COVID-19 variants. People who are 17 or younger need written consent to get any Moderna or Novavax vaccine, as they are still under EUA. Kids and teens who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems need permission to get an additional dose.

Parents or legal guardians need to give their permission in writing. It can't be given over the phone or through email.

How can I get my entire family vaccinated at the same time?

There are many ways to get your family vaccinated together.

Most vaccine providers will let you sign up for vaccine appointments. You can schedule appointments for all members of your family. Many vaccine providers also offer walk-in vaccinations. People in a family can show up together for these walk-in clinics.

Because the dose and brand of COVID-19 vaccine you get may be different depending on each family member's age, it is important to make sure the provider you choose has the right ones available. Babies and toddlers 6 months through 2 years cannot be vaccinated by a pharmacist. They can get their vaccine only at a doctor's office or local health center where the correct dose for their age is available.

Children are encouraged to get the vaccine from a health care provider, as the vaccine may be given with other routine childhood vaccines that help keep them healthy. Parents and guardians of children who do not have an established health care provider can visit [MySpot.nc.gov](#) to search for a nearby vaccine provider. They are also encouraged to contact their local health department. Parental consent is required.

Many places in North Carolina offer COVID-19 vaccines specifically for children and their families. Visit [MySpot.nc.gov](#) for more information about how vaccines work and where you can find an appointment near you. You can also call the CDC-INFO contact center for more information at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636 / TTY 888-232-6348). It is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends.

How can I avoid missing work to get my vaccine doses?

Many places will let you schedule vaccine appointments on the weekends or in the evenings. Many places also allow walk-ins.

You may have temporary side effects after getting vaccinated. This could include a sore arm, fever, or feeling tired or achy for a day or two. This can be normal and shows that the vaccine is working to give your body protection against COVID-19. NCDHHS is encouraging employers to give employees paid time off to get a vaccine or to rest if they have temporary side effects. If you don't have paid time off or find it difficult to miss work, we encourage getting vaccinated right before a day off.

Can I get a ride to my vaccine visit?

Yes, there are several free transportation options to get vaccinated:

- Call your [local transit authority](#) for a free ride to your vaccine appointment. You may need to call in advance to schedule a ride.
- Ask your vaccine provider about transportation options.

Can I be vaccinated or boosted at home because of limited mobility?

At-home vaccination services are no longer available through the Piedmont Triad Regional Council Area Agency on Aging and NCDHHS. Please contact your local health department or visit [MySpot.nc.gov](https://www.nc.gov/MySpot) to find a COVID-19 vaccine location near you.

When am I up to date with my COVID-19 vaccines?

You are [up to date on your vaccines](#) when you have been given all of the vaccines that are recommended for you based on your age and current health.

- Children ages 6 months through 4 years are up to date if:
 - They have healthy immune systems and got three shots of the lower-dose Pfizer vaccine or two shots of the lower-dose Moderna vaccine (for children 6 months through 5 years) and the updated vaccine that protects against variants at least two months later.
- Children ages 5 to 11 years who get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine are up to date if:
 - They have healthy immune systems and got two shots of the lower-dose vaccine and it's too soon for them to get the updated vaccine or
 - They got two shots of the lower-dose vaccine and an updated vaccine two months later.
- People ages 12 and older are up to date if:
 - They have healthy immune systems and got two shots of the Pfizer, Moderna or Novavax vaccine or one shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and it's too soon for them to get an updated vaccine, or
 - They got two shots of the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax vaccine or one shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and an updated vaccine two months after their last shot or any booster.
- For people who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems, there are a few differences to remember:
 - All children 6 months to 4 years who get Pfizer should get three vaccine doses.
 - Children 6 months through 5 years who get the Moderna vaccine should get a third dose at least four weeks after their second one, plus the updated vaccine at least two months later
 - Children 5 to 11 years should get three shots of the lower-dose Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. This age group should also get the updated vaccine at least two months after their third vaccine or most recent booster.
 - People ages 12 years and older should get three doses of Pfizer or Moderna, plus the updated vaccine; two doses of Novavax and an updated vaccine; or one dose of Johnson & Johnson, plus an additional dose of Pfizer or Moderna and an updated vaccine.
 - People with compromised immune systems are also up to date after they get their initial doses but are not yet able to get their updated vaccine because it's too soon.

Schedule for [most kids](#) and those who have [compromised immune systems](#).

Which vaccine did you get?	VACCINATION SCHEDULE <i>for most people.</i>
Pfizer 12 years+ schedule	1st dose → 3-8 weeks → 2nd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose
Moderna 12 years+ schedule	1st dose → 4-8 weeks → 2nd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose
Novavax 12 years+ schedule	1st dose → 3-8 weeks → 2nd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose
Johnson & Johnson: 18 years+ schedule	1st dose → 2+ months → Updated dose

Which vaccine did you get?	VACCINATION SCHEDULE <i>for moderately or severely immunocompromised people ONLY.</i>
Pfizer 12 years+ schedule	1st dose → 3-8 weeks → 2nd dose → 4+ weeks → 3rd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose
Moderna 12 years+ schedule	1st dose → 4 weeks → 2nd dose → 4+ weeks → 3rd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose
Novavax 12 years+ schedule	1st dose → 3 weeks → 2nd dose → 2+ months → Updated dose
Johnson & Johnson: 18 years+ schedule	1st dose → 4+ weeks → Addl. dose of Pfizer or Moderna → 2+ months → Updated dose

Do I need an additional dose?

[According to the CDC](#), if you have a weakened immune system, you are at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness and death. Additionally, your immune response to COVID-19 vaccination may not be as strong as in people who are not immunocompromised. Most people 6 months and older who have compromised immune systems can get three doses of vaccine for their initial series, as well as a dose of the updated vaccine that protects against variants. The timing and need for additional or updated doses depend on a person's age and which vaccine they get. Detailed information on COVID-19 vaccines for people with compromised immune systems can be found [here](#) on the CDC's website.

Do I need a updated shot?

It is important to stay up to date on all COVID-19 vaccines, when eligible. During the recent Omicron surge, those who were boosted were 21 times less likely to die from COVID-19 compared to those who were unvaccinated. They were also seven times less likely to be hospitalized.

The updated COVID-19 vaccine that protects against variants is recommended for most everyone 6 months and older to strengthen their protection against the virus. COVID-19 vaccines and updated doses are important, especially if you are older or have a lot of severe health conditions. Most people should get an updated Pfizer or Moderna vaccine two months after their last shot in their initial series or any booster if they are 6 months or older. The updated vaccine is the best protection against COVID-19 and is made to target variants of the virus.

A Novavax booster is also available for adults 18 and older who are unable or unwilling to get an updated Pfizer or Moderna vaccine and have not gotten any other updated dose yet. You can get the Novavax booster 6 months after you finish your initial COVID-19 vaccine series.

You may find updated COVID-19 vaccine shots at your health care provider, pharmacies, and other locations. You do not need to get your shots all at the same place. Also, the location does not need to have the same vaccine

brand as your first series of shots if you are 5 or older. Kids 6 months to 4 years should get the same COVID-19 vaccine brand for all recommended doses. Speak with a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you have questions about what vaccine is right for you. Visit [MySpot.nc.gov](https://www.myspot.nc.gov) to find a vaccine provider near you.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwFOdFiiUo8>

Will there be more COVID-19 vaccine shots in the future?

Updated vaccines are recommended for most North Carolinians 6 months and older to strengthen your protection from COVID-19. Many vaccines require more than one shot for immunity, and updated shots for vaccines are common. For example, it is recommended that everyone 6 months and older get a flu shot each year.

Research continues to show that vaccines:

- Are safe and work well; and,
- Protect people from getting very sick, being hospitalized, and dying from COVID-19.

During the recent Omicron surge, people who had gotten their booster were 21 times less likely to die from COVID-19 compared to those who had not been vaccinated. They were also seven times less likely to be hospitalized.

The updated Moderna and Pfizer doses are referred to as bivalent vaccines as they target both the original coronavirus strain and Omicron subvariants. A Novavax booster is also available for adults 18 and older who are unable or unwilling to get the updated Pfizer or Moderna vaccine and have not gotten any other updated dose yet. The Novavax booster targets the original strain of the virus. You can get the Novavax booster 6 months after you finish your initial COVID-19 vaccine series.

NCDHHS will continue to follow the guidance of the FDA and CDC as we work to move North Carolina forward.

I got a vaccine brand in another country that is not authorized in the United States. Can I get an updated vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines that are **NOT** authorized or approved by the FDA OR listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO) do not count toward vaccination in the U.S. You should restart your series of vaccines with an FDA-approved vaccine at least 28 days after your last shot. You should also get an updated booster two months after completing your initial series, if you are 12 or older.

If you got a COVID-19 vaccine **listed for emergency use by the WHO** but that is not approved or authorized by the FDA, you should get the updated vaccine that targets COVID-19 variants at least two months after your last vaccine if you are 12 years of age or older. If you have a moderately or severely compromised immune system, you may need an additional shot prior to your updated vaccine as well. [Learn more about the updated vaccine and additional doses.](#)

Speak with a health care provider if you have questions.

How long after receiving an updated vaccine dose am I considered up to date?

You are considered up to date right after your updated vaccine. Its effectiveness increases over the next two weeks; however, the updated vaccine doesn't take two weeks to start protecting you from COVID-19 because your first shot(s) have already built up some immunity.

If a person with a compromised immune system already got an additional dose, do they still need to get the updated vaccine dose?

Yes, depending on age and vaccine brand. During the recent Omicron surge, people who got their booster were 21 times less likely to die from COVID-19 compared to people who had not been vaccinated. They were also seven times less likely to be hospitalized.

- Most people 6 months and older who got an additional dose of Pfizer or Moderna should get an updated vaccine at least two months after their additional dose.

- People 12 and older who got Novavax should not get an additional vaccine dose. They should still get the updated vaccine at least two months after their second dose.
- People 18 and older who got Johnson & Johnson should get an additional dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine and the updated vaccine at least two months later.

Ask a health care provider if you have questions about which vaccine is right for you.

WHY YOU SHOULD GET A COVID-19 VACCINE

What can I do differently once I am up to date on my COVID-19 vaccines?

Once you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines, you can participate in many of the activities that you did before the pandemic.

Vaccines provide the best protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. However, people who are vaccinated can still get infected and spread the virus to others. Everyone should stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines by getting the updated shot that protects against variants when they are able. [Get information on COVID-19 vaccines.](#)

Even if you are vaccinated, you should [get tested](#) if you have any symptoms of COVID-19. People with COVID-19 should stay away from others for at least five full days. They should then wear a mask for an additional five days. People who may have been around someone with COVID-19 should wear a high-quality mask for 10 days and get tested on day five – this includes those who are up to date on COVID-19 vaccines and those who are not.

Why do I need to get a vaccine if I can do other things to prevent COVID-19 from spreading, like staying away from other people?

Vaccines prepare your body to fight the virus if you are exposed to it. Vaccines help protect you from getting very sick, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. Other steps, like wearing a mask, staying 6 feet away from others, and washing your hands, help lower your chance of being infected or spreading the virus to others. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is everyone's best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.

Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if there are treatments for COVID-19?

Preventing COVID-19 is much safer than treating it. Vaccines may protect you from getting infected. They can also help keep you from getting very sick. Even for people who develop a mild case of COVID-19, the symptoms can still bring discomfort. Common symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, new loss of taste or smell, "brain fog," and more. These symptoms can last for weeks or even months for some people.

Some people who have had COVID-19 develop a condition called long COVID. Long COVID is when symptoms continue for four or more weeks. You can develop long COVID even after your original symptoms have resolved. These symptoms may be nothing like the symptoms you felt when you were first infected. Long COVID can happen to anyone, including people who were never hospitalized for COVID-19. The vaccines can help prevent infections that may lead to long COVID.

Getting vaccinated can also help keep your loved ones safe. This is especially important for those around you who can't be vaccinated.

Don't wait to get your vaccine, and get the updated dose that protects against COVID-19 variants as soon as you are able. Visit [MySpot.nc.gov](https://www.myspot.nc.gov) to find a vaccine location near you.

Treatments for COVID-19 are for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have symptoms. Treatments can help stop people from getting very sick by helping their body fight the virus. They can also shorten the time that you are sick by slowing the growth of the virus in your body. Treatments do not stop you from catching COVID-19 again later. Treatments do not stop you from spreading COVID-19 to others.

If you test positive and have symptoms, don't wait to see a health care provider. Treatment needs to be started within the first few days after you are infected for it to work well. Talk to a health care provider about treatments, or visit our website for more information on [testing](#) and [treatments for COVID-19](#).

Do I need to get the vaccine if everyone else is getting it?

Yes. It is very important that everyone in North Carolina does their part to help get as many people vaccinated as possible. Staying up to date on vaccines is the best protection against serious illness from COVID-19. It can also make us more confident that we and our loved ones are protected as we get back to the people and places we love. We need everyone who can safely get vaccinated to do so. This will help protect those who can't be vaccinated because of their age or medical conditions. Prevention is the best treatment to protect against COVID-19, so get vaccinated.

Do I still need to be vaccinated if I have had COVID-19?

Yes, adults and children should get vaccinated if they already had COVID-19. People who had COVID-19 and got better are somewhat protected against the virus, although we don't know how long that protection lasts. This protection is called natural immunity. Growing evidence shows that getting vaccinated after having COVID-19 infection further increases protection from getting another infection and being hospitalized, even when cases in the community are higher.

Experts don't know exactly how long protection from natural immunity lasts or how it is affected by different variants of the virus. The risk of getting very sick, dying, or having long-lasting effects from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefit of natural immunity.

If you were treated for COVID-19 with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, you **do not need to wait** before getting a vaccine. Talk to a health care provider if you don't know what treatments you got or if you have questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

Do I still need to be vaccinated if I have antibodies to COVID-19?

Even if you have antibodies, you can still get infected, so getting vaccinated is still recommended. When antibodies are found (a positive test result), it may mean that a person was infected with COVID-19 and their body's immune system responded to the virus at some point in the past. These antibodies can be found in the blood of people previously infected even if they didn't have symptoms.

Should I get vaccinated or boosted against COVID-19 if I am currently sick with COVID-19?

No. Wait until you no longer have symptoms. When you feel better, you should get vaccinated or boosted (if eligible). It will give you more protection against getting sick again. If you do not have symptoms, you can get vaccinated and/or boosted after your [isolation ends](#) (which is 5 days after you took your positive COVID-19 test).

If you have symptoms of long COVID, you can get the vaccine or updated dose after your initial symptoms from your virus are gone. These initial symptoms can start anywhere from 2 to 14 days after you are exposed to the virus and can last up to four weeks.

While you can get your vaccine or updated dose after your isolation ends, the CDC says you can consider delaying your shot by 3 months after your symptoms started or, if you had no symptoms, when you received a positive test. This is because people who had COVID-19 and got better are somewhat protected against the virus. However, we don't know how long that protection lasts.

A health care provider, pharmacist, or vaccine provider can tell you what to do. You can also call the CDC-INFO contact center for more information at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636 / TTY 888-232-6348). It is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends. [Learn more about what to do if you are sick](#).

Should children get vaccinated if they already had COVID-19?

Yes, your child should still get the vaccine even if they have had COVID-19 in the past. Multiple studies show that COVID-19 vaccines can be safely given to people who have had COVID-19. [Research shows](#) that people get better protection by being vaccinated, even if they've had COVID-19. Any protection you may have gained from having COVID-19 may decrease over time, especially if you had mild symptoms. Getting vaccinated is also the best way to protect family and friends who can't get the vaccine because they are not old enough or because they have certain medical conditions.

Anyone who is currently sick with COVID-19 should wait for their symptoms to go away completely before getting any vaccine doses. If the person has no symptoms, wait at least until your isolation is over, 5 days after your first positive COVID-19 test. People who were treated with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma **do not need to wait** before getting vaccinated. While you can get your vaccine or updated dose after your isolation ends, the CDC says you can consider delaying your shot by 3 months after your symptoms started or, if you had no symptoms, when you received a positive test. This is because people who had COVID-19 and got better are somewhat protected against the virus. However, we don't know how long that protection lasts.

Can people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or who want to become pregnant be vaccinated?

People who are pregnant or who recently had a baby and are infected with COVID-19 are about 40% more likely to develop serious complications or die than their peers who have not been infected. They also have a higher risk of negative outcomes for both mom and baby. Getting up to date with COVID-19 vaccines is recommended for:

- People who are pregnant
- People who are breastfeeding
- People who are trying to get pregnant now
- People who might become pregnant in the future

On Sept. 29, 2021, the CDC shared an urgent health advisory to increase COVID-19 vaccination for people in these groups. They did this because vaccines can help prevent serious illness, deaths, and adverse pregnancy outcomes. More than 218,000 [pregnant women](#) have gotten at least one shot of a COVID-19 vaccine in the United States. You do not need to wait or avoid getting pregnant if you are planning to get vaccinated. People who are seeking fertility treatment can also get vaccinated. There is currently no reason to believe that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems in women or men.

[Growing evidence](#) shows that getting vaccinated against COVID-19 during pregnancy is safe and works well. Research also shows that the benefits of getting a vaccine far outweigh the risks. The risks of getting COVID-19 are greater for pregnant women than for people who are not pregnant. Pregnant women with COVID-19 have a higher risk of being hospitalized and needing care in the ICU. Pregnant women with COVID-19 are at higher risk for preterm birth (delivering the baby earlier than 37 weeks). They might also be at higher risk for other negative health outcomes related to pregnancy than pregnant people who don't have COVID-19. These outcomes could include pregnancy loss.

Babies whose moms were vaccinated may also get [some protection](#) from the vaccines. This is because the antibodies from the vaccines can be transferred from mom to baby. Getting the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax vaccine while pregnant might help keep babies 6 months and younger who get COVID-19 out of the hospital. A small study published in JAMA showed that babies born to moms who had been vaccinated against COVID-19 continued to have antibodies at six months, unlike babies born to moms who previously had COVID-19. This means that you and your baby may both be protected against COVID-19.

There are many ways for you to learn more about the vaccines and their safety for pregnant women and those who want to get pregnant. You can talk with a health care provider, send a message to an expert at [MotherToBaby](#), or call 1-866-626-6847. [Learn more about COVID-19 vaccination and pregnancy, fertility, and breastfeeding here.](#)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvU8fmfOvb0>

I'd like to get pregnant soon. Will the COVID-19 vaccine hurt my chances?

It is recommended that people who are trying to get pregnant now or might become pregnant in the future get vaccinated. Their partners should also get the vaccine. There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause problems trying to get pregnant for women or men.

Many people have become pregnant after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Recent studies found no differences in pregnancy success between women who were vaccinated and women who were not vaccinated. The risk of complications is higher for you and your growing baby if you get sick with COVID-19 while you're pregnant.

I was vaccinated while pregnant and/or am currently breastfeeding. Should I delay the COVID-19 vaccine for my baby?

No, do not delay. Antibodies are transferred through breastmilk or passed through the placenta during pregnancy, but these antibodies may wane quickly and have not shown to be clinically meaningful in protecting infants from COVID-19. You should still get your baby vaccinated.

Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I just got another vaccine for something else?

You can get the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other vaccines. This includes the flu vaccine.

Who should NOT get a COVID-19 vaccine?

You should NOT get the vaccine if:

- You are very allergic to something in the [vaccine](#) itself. This is rare and should be checked with a doctor, pharmacist, or allergy specialist. (In most cases, getting COVID-19 is much more dangerous than an allergic reaction.)
- If you have a history of blood clots, don't get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax vaccines work differently and are [recommended](#).
- You are under 6 months old. The vaccine isn't available for this age group.

Nearly everyone else should get the COVID-19 vaccine. This includes people who are young, old, healthy, or sick.

Talk with a doctor first if you think you have a medical reason for not getting the COVID-19 vaccine. They can help you understand your options. If you should not get the vaccine, they can give you a written document that explains to others why you are not vaccinated.

ONE-DOSE VERSUS TWO-DOSE VACCINES

Will I be able to choose which vaccine I get?

All the vaccines work very well in preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death. The Moderna, Pfizer, and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines are preferred. However, getting any vaccine, including the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, is better than not being vaccinated. The vaccine you get will be based on your age at the time of vaccination, which (if any) vaccine you got previously, and what vaccines your provider has available.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only available to people who are allergic to the other vaccines, can't access the other vaccines, or would not get vaccinated if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

An updated vaccine is also available for most people 6 months and older. The updated Moderna and Pfizer shots are referred to as bivalent vaccines as they target both the original coronavirus strain and Omicron subvariants. A Novavax booster is also available for adults 18 and older who are unable or unwilling to get an updated Pfizer or Moderna vaccine and have not gotten any other booster dose yet.

Check with your provider if you have questions about which vaccine is right for you or if you want a specific brand to see what they offer.

What are the differences between the one-shot and two-shot vaccines?

The CDC recommends that people get the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax vaccine to protect against COVID-19. However, the vaccines you can get depend on your age and which (if any) vaccine you got previously. Click on [vaccine differences](#) for more information. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only available to adults who are allergic to the other vaccines, can't access the other vaccines, or who would not get vaccinated if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Ask a health care provider if you have questions about which vaccine is right for you.

The two-shot vaccines give your body temporary instructions to make a protein. This protein teaches your body to fight the COVID-19 virus. The one-shot vaccine (made by Johnson & Johnson) uses DNA to give your body the same type of temporary instructions. There is no COVID-19 virus in any of the vaccines. None of the vaccines can change your DNA. [Learn more about how the vaccines work.](#)

The temporary side effects are similar among all vaccines. People who get the one-shot vaccine may only experience these temporary side effects once from that vaccine. Temporary side effects may include a sore arm, headache, fever, or feeling tired and achy for a day or two after getting the vaccine. None of the vaccines can give you COVID-19.

Why are two shots necessary for some vaccines at first?

The Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax vaccines require two shots (or sometimes three, depending on your age and if you have a moderately or severely compromised immune system). You need two shots to build up strong protection against COVID-19. The goal of the first shot is to get your body ready to have the best protection. The second shot strengthens this protection. It is important that your first two shots are the same vaccine brand.

The FDA and CDC recommend that everyone get two shots of the Moderna, Pfizer, or Novavax vaccine. They should also stay up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccines. This includes [additional shots and the updated vaccine that targets COVID-19 variants](#), depending on your age, if you have a compromised immune system, and the initial vaccine brand you get. Learn more about the [different COVID-19 vaccines](#).

How long should I wait to get the second (or third for kids under 5 who get Pfizer) shot of the COVID-19 vaccine?

Anyone who got their first shot of the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax (for anyone 12 and older) COVID-19 vaccine should speak with a doctor to decide the best time to get their second shot (or third, if needed). The CDC suggests that waiting eight weeks between the first and second shots increases the protection the vaccines provide in people ages 12 to 49. It may also lower the small risk of heart inflammation (a condition known as myocarditis), especially for males.

It is still recommended to wait three weeks before getting a second Pfizer or Novavax shot and four weeks for the second Moderna shot for:

- People with moderately or severely compromised immune systems
- People ages 65 or older
- People at high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19
- Children ages 5 to 11 years if getting Pfizer and 6 to 11 years if getting Moderna (Novavax is not available for people under 12)

Talk with a health care provider if you have questions about when you or your child is due for a second (or third) shot. [Visit the CDC website for a full schedule for vaccines.](#)

What if I don't get my second shot at the right time?

You should **get your second (or third for some) shot as close to the recommended time** as possible. However, if you get your second shot of a COVID-19 vaccine any time after the recommended date, you do not have to start over.

Can I get a different vaccine for my second shot?

The CDC does not recommend getting a different vaccine brand for your second shot. If you got a Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax vaccine, you should get the same vaccine brand when it's time to get your second shot. This is true regardless of which vaccine you got for your previous shots. Those who got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine are fully vaccinated after one shot.

An updated vaccine is also available for most people 6 months and older. You can get a different brand for the updated vaccine than your original series, depending on your age.

Do I need to go back to the same provider for my second shot or my updated vaccine dose?

No. You do not have to get the second shot at the same place where you got your first shot. If you go to a different provider for the second shot, make sure you go to a provider with the same brand of vaccine (e.g., Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax) that you got for your first shot. Bring your vaccination card with you so the provider can confirm which vaccine you got and when. People who can get the updated vaccine that targets COVID-19 variants can go to any available provider for their shot.

Who will continue to benefit from waiting three or four weeks between their first and second shots of COVID-19 vaccines?

Three weeks (Pfizer and Novavax) or four weeks (Moderna) between first and second doses is best for people who are more likely to be less protected after their first shot. This includes:

- people who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems
- people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19, such as adults who are 65 years and older
- people who need protection quickly, such as when the virus is quickly spreading in their community

Ask a health care provider about the best time for you to get your second shot.

Who might benefit from waiting eight weeks between their first and second shots of COVID-19 vaccines?

Eight weeks between the first and second shot is recommended for people ages 12 through 64 years – who:

- do not have a moderately or severely compromised immune system
- are not at increased risk of getting very sick from COVID-19
- do not need protection quickly

Talk with a health care provider about the best time to get your second shot of the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax COVID-19 vaccine.

If two shots are necessary for some vaccines, how will I know when to get my second shot?

North Carolina uses a secure data system called the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS) to make sure you get your second shot or the updated vaccine that targets COVID-19 variants at the right time. When a person gets the first shot, they are asked to make a second appointment. You do not have to go back to the same provider for other shots or your updated vaccine dose. You will also be given a vaccination card with information about which vaccine(s) you got and the date when you got them. Keep the card in a safe spot. Take a picture of it in case it gets misplaced. You may get an email or text with a reminder for your second shot.

People who choose to use v-safe, which is a CDC tool to that can give you personalized health check-ins after your shot, will also get text reminders for their second shot. The provider who gave the first vaccine may also help with reminders for the second shot. State and federal privacy laws make sure none of your private information will be shared. The shot you take and when you need your second shot is confidential health information. This information is carefully managed to protect your privacy.

VACCINE SAFETY

Have COVID-19 vaccines proven to be safe and effective?

Yes. The currently recommended vaccines have proven to build strong protection against COVID-19. They have also proven to protect against hospitalization and death from COVID-19. There were no serious safety concerns in the clinical trials. Safety data from more than 298 million shots of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines that were given in the first six months after the vaccine was approved in the U.S. show that most reported side effects were mild and didn't last long.

Who makes sure the vaccines are safe?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) makes sure all food and drugs are safe. The COVID-19 vaccines must pass clinical trials like other drugs and vaccines. The FDA checks the data and authorizes vaccines only if they are safe and work well. Vaccines are held to very high safety standards because they are given to millions of healthy people to prevent serious diseases.

The FDA can get vaccines to people faster through an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). After the FDA has authorized a vaccine, an independent advisory committee for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reviews the data. The advisory committee then advises the CDC on whether a vaccine should be given to the general public. Like all vaccines, the FDA keeps checking safety through the [Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#). Health care providers are required to report serious side effects. They also must report if someone gets seriously sick with COVID-19. There is also a smartphone app called [v-safe](#) that uses text messages and web surveys to do health check-ins after people get a COVID-19 vaccine. People can report any problems they may have with a vaccine through v-safe. The CDC and FDA continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines with several vaccine safety monitoring systems.

Which vaccines have FDA approval?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to help prevent COVID-19 in people ages 16 years and older. The Pfizer vaccine is also authorized for children ages 6 months to 15 years under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). Children ages 6 months through 11 years get a smaller dose of the Pfizer vaccine than people 12 years and older. A third dose of the Pfizer vaccine should be given to certain people who have compromised immune systems.

The FDA also authorized use of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine under EUA in people 6 months through 17 years. Spikevax, the FDA-approved Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, is for use in those 18 years and older. It is the same vaccine with a new name. Moderna is also available under EUA as a third dose for those 6 months and older with certain kinds of immunocompromise.

The FDA also authorized use of the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine under EUA in people 12 years and older. The Novavax vaccine provides a more familiar type of protein-based vaccine technology that has been used for more than 30 years in shots that help prevent diseases like shingles, hepatitis B, the flu, and other illnesses.

Updated Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are also available and recommended for most people 6 months and older. A Novavax booster is also available for adults 18 and older who are unable or unwilling to get an updated Pfizer or Moderna vaccine and have not gotten any other booster dose yet.

All available COVID-19 vaccines in the United States have been under an EUA. Rigorous clinical trials among thousands of people have proven that vaccines are safe and effective. Over 210 million people in the United States have been safely vaccinated against COVID-19.

How were the vaccines developed so quickly?

Scientists had a head start in developing all the vaccines. They are built on decades of research. The last decade of investment and experience in vaccine making was used to help us fight COVID-19. Creating these vaccines did not skip any steps in development, testing, or clinical trials.

Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

No. The vaccine does not contain any virus that could make you sick with COVID-19. The vaccine gives your body instructions that teach your body to fight COVID-19. Your body naturally breaks down or destroys the instructions from the vaccine.

Are there any side effects from the vaccines?

No serious side effects were reported in clinical trials. Safety data from more than 298 million doses of Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines administered in the first six months after they were approved in the U.S. show that most reported side effects were mild and didn't last long. Temporary side effects after getting the vaccine may include a sore arm, headache, feeling tired and achy for a day or two, or a fever. These temporary side effects were more common after the second shot. Younger people are more likely to have side effects than older people.

In most cases, these temporary side effects are good signs that your body is building protection. You can take medicines like Tylenol or ibuprofen after getting your shot to help with these temporary side effects. While extremely rare, there have been a few cases of severe allergic reaction to the Pfizer vaccine. Vaccine providers are prepared with medicines if they need to treat someone.

While it is extremely rare, there have been very few cases (out of about 18.7 million shots) of a condition called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia (TTS) associated with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. TTS is defined by blood clots with low platelets. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends getting the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax COVID-19 vaccine for most people for preventing severe illness and hospitalization from COVID-19. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only available to those who are allergic to the other vaccines, can't access the other vaccines, or who would not get vaccinated if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

If you have been vaccinated with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and develop:

- Shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling, persistent abdominal pain, severe or persistent headaches or blurred vision, easy bruising, or tiny blood spots under the skin beyond where the vaccine was given within three weeks of getting the vaccine, seek medical attention right away.

There are no safety concerns for people who were previously vaccinated and did not experience TTS.

The FDA reported that there have been very rare cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) after getting the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine with 100 preliminary cases out of more than 12.8 million. These cases mostly occurred in males aged 50 years and older. GBS is a disorder that affects the brain. It is usually triggered by an infection that most people fully recover from.

Nearly all COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths occur in people who are not vaccinated. You are more likely to get seriously sick from COVID-19 if you are not vaccinated than you are to get an extremely rare and serious side effect after getting your vaccine. Everyone who can get a COVID-19 vaccine should get vaccinated and get the updated vaccine that targets variants when it is time.

What is the risk of an allergic reaction from the vaccine?

Severe allergic reactions to the vaccines have been very rare and mostly occurred in people who have had previous severe allergic reactions. People who have had severe allergic reactions, also called anaphylaxis, to any ingredient

in the [Pfizer](#), Moderna, Novavax, or [Johnson & Johnson](#) vaccines should not get that vaccine. People who have had this type of severe allergic reaction to any vaccine or treatment that is injected should talk with their health care provider about the risks and benefits of getting vaccinated. People with allergies to foods, animals, environmental triggers (such as pollen), latex, or medications taken by mouth can be vaccinated with any of the COVID-19 vaccines. The same is true if you have family members who have had severe allergic reactions. You will be screened before getting the vaccine to see if you are at an increased risk for an allergic reaction. If you are, your health care provider may decide that you should not get the vaccine. Most reactions occur within a few minutes to one hour after getting vaccinated. You will be asked to stay at the place where you got your vaccine for a short time (15-30 minutes) for monitoring to ensure your safety. More information can be found [here](#) for the Pfizer, Moderna, Novavax, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

If you had a severe or immediate allergic reaction (within four hours) after getting a dose of the Moderna, Pfizer, or Novavax vaccine, you should NOT get a second shot of those vaccines. Talk to your provider about getting a different type of vaccine after an allergic reaction. More information for people with COVID-19 vaccine allergies can be found [here](#).

How do I report a problem or side effect caused by the COVID-19 vaccine?

The CDC and FDA encourage you to report possible side effects using the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#). This national system collects data to look for side effects that are unexpected. They also look for side effects that appear to happen more often than expected or have unusual patterns. Reports to VAERS help the CDC monitor the safety of vaccines. Safety is a top priority.

The CDC also implemented a smartphone-based tool called [v-safe](#) to check in on people's health after they get a COVID-19 vaccine. When you get your vaccine, you should also get a v-safe information sheet telling you how to enroll in v-safe. If you enroll, you will get regular text messages with surveys where you can report any problems or side effects you have after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. CDC especially encourages parents and caregivers of children to enroll them in v-safe to help our understanding of post-vaccination health effects in kids.

When should I see a doctor if I have side effects after getting vaccinated?

Contact a health care provider if:

- any redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours
- your temporary side effects are worrying you
- the side effects do not seem to be going away after a few days

It is extremely rare that you would have a serious reaction. However, you should contact a health care provider if you develop:

- severe headache, backache, severe abdominal pain, new changes in vision, a changed mental status, numbness, leg pain or swelling, shortness of breath, tiny red spots on your skin, or new or easy bruising within three weeks after getting vaccinated.

In most cases, temporary side effects are normal and good signs that your body is building protection. Safety data from more than 298 million doses of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines that were given in the first six months after the vaccines were approved in the U.S. show that most reported side effects were mild and didn't last long. If you experience side effects, taking medicines such as ibuprofen or Tylenol, drinking lots of fluids, or placing a cool washcloth on your forehead can help.

If you have a history of allergic reactions to any vaccine or treatment that is injected, you should talk with your health care provider about the risks and benefits of getting vaccinated before getting the shot. Although very rare, if you experience a severe allergic reaction to the vaccine, get immediate medical care by calling 911. Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, swelling of your face and throat, a fast heartbeat, a bad rash all over your body, dizziness, and weakness. An allergic reaction is considered severe when a person needs to be treated with the medication epinephrine or and EpiPen®. It is also considered severe if the person must go to the hospital.

What do we know about the vaccine's long-term safety?

More than 548 million COVID-19 shots were given in the United States from Dec. 14, 2020, through Feb. 16, 2022. COVID-19 vaccines were studied in tens of thousands of people in clinical trials. The vaccines met the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) strict scientific standards for safety, effectiveness and quality needed to support emergency use authorization (EUA) and approval. The CDC continues to actively collect safety data using the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#), which has been tracking safety on all vaccines since 1990. Learn more about all the ways that vaccine safety is being monitored [here](#).

Why is the CDC recommending the Moderna, Pfizer, and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines as the preferred vaccines?

The recommendation is based on comparing evidence on safety and effectiveness of the Moderna, Pfizer, Novavax, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines. It follows similar recommendations from other countries, including Canada and the United Kingdom. There is also a large supply of these vaccines in North Carolina and across the country. Research has found more cases of a rare condition with blood clotting and low platelets associated with the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. This rare condition is called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia (TTS). TTS after the Johnson & Johnson shot is rare. There have been around four cases per one million doses given. The CDC continues to remind people that receiving any vaccine, including the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, is better than not being vaccinated. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only available to those who are allergic to the other vaccines, can't access the other vaccines, or who would not get vaccinated if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. People with a history of TTS should not get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. All the vaccines continue to be carefully monitored for safety. [Read more information from the CDC about side effect concerns](#).

Is myocarditis, or heart inflammation, a side effect of COVID-19 vaccines?

There have been rare reports of a condition called myocarditis occurring after someone is vaccinated with the Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines in the United States and Europe. Myocarditis happens when your heart muscle becomes inflamed. Another condition known as pericarditis happens when the outer lining of the heart is inflamed. In both cases, the body's immune system is causing inflammation because of an infection or some other trigger. Myocarditis can be serious, but these cases are often mild and get better without any treatment. These cases are seen more often in teens and young adults after their second shot and within a week of vaccination. Symptoms can include abnormal heart rhythms, difficulty breathing, and chest pain. However, the risk of rare heart-related problems like myocarditis and pericarditis is much higher from becoming infected with COVID-19 than from the vaccines. [Recent data from 40 health care systems](#) found that the risk for rare heart problems was much larger after a COVID-19 infection than after getting vaccinated. This was true for both males and females of all ages. Young men infected with COVID-19 are up to eight times more likely to get rare heart problems than men who were vaccinated against COVID-19.

The CDC has systems set up to look for safety concerns with the vaccines. These systems are watched closely. The CDC will continue to look at any reports of myocarditis and pericarditis that happen after COVID-19 vaccination. The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has also reviewed the data. The CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics, and a few other medical and public health groups released a [statement](#) recommending COVID-19 vaccines. They noted that this is an extremely rare side effect with mostly mild cases. More people who developed these side effects after vaccines got better on their own or with a small amount of treatment compared to people who got COVID-19.

Is the vaccine safe for children with special health care needs?

Children and youth with special health care needs are especially vulnerable to COVID-19, and some infected children are having long-term side effects of COVID-19. Many children with disabilities have underlying medical conditions that put them at increased risk for getting very sick from COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and available for children 6 months and older who have special health care needs, and the CDC recommends that

children in this group get vaccinated. For more information and resources about getting children with disabilities vaccinated, visit the CDC's [vaccine guidance page for children with disabilities](#).

What should I do if I got a vaccine in another country that is not currently available in the United States?

If you got a COVID-19 vaccine that was NOT FDA-authorized, FDA-approved, or among the vaccines listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO), these shots do not count toward vaccination in the U.S. You should start over with an FDA-approved or authorized vaccine at least 28 days after your last shot. Two months after your second shot, you should get the updated vaccine that targets COVID-19 variants. Please note that no data are available on whether starting over with your vaccines is safe or works well.

If you got a COVID-19 vaccine that is not authorized by FDA, but is on the WHO list for emergency use, you do not need to start over with your vaccines. However, you should get the updated vaccine dose at least two months after your last shot.

[Additional information about these recommendations can be found here](#) and here is [a list of vaccines and their authorizations](#).

What other COVID-19 vaccines are being developed and considered?

It is difficult to say when other vaccines may be available. As of March 2021, the COVID-19 vaccines listed below are either in the last phase of clinical trials, planned to start the last phase of clinical trials, or have completed clinical trials in the U.S.:

- AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine

Ocugen, Inc. submitted an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) request to the FDA for a vaccine called COVAXIN™ for children between the ages of 2 and 18 years.

You cannot get COVID-19 from any of the vaccines in development. All vaccines teach your body to fight the COVID-19 virus.

How can someone enroll in a clinical trial for a vaccine?

Over 100 vaccines for COVID-19 are under development. Many are in clinical trials that are looking for participants. People interested in enrolling in a COVID-19 vaccine trial can visit the following website:

<https://www.coronaviruspreventionnetwork.org/understanding-clinical-studies/>.

AFTER YOUR VACCINATION

Will I be provided with proof that I have had the vaccine?

Yes. You will get a card that tells you what COVID-19 vaccine you got, when you got it, and where you got it. Keep the card in a safe spot. Take a picture of it in case you lose it. Some people who have email will also get an email with proof of vaccination.

Many people can get their COVID-19 vaccine information from the [North Carolina COVID-19 Vaccine Portal](#) if they got the vaccine from one of the following locations:

- A North Carolina doctor's office
- Hospital
- Pharmacy
- Grocery store
- Health department
- Community event

Please see more information on how to [access the NC COVID-19 Vaccine Portal](#).

Your vaccine information will not be available if you got the vaccine:

- Outside of North Carolina
- In a military setting
- At a tribal or urban Indian health facility

Contact your provider for vaccine information.

If you lose your vaccine card or need your record, contact your vaccine provider.

Can I stop wearing a mask after I'm vaccinated?

Well-fitting masks with layers help to protect you from all COVID-19 variants. Higher grade masks, like N95, KN95s, surgical, or procedure masks, offer even more protection.

You should still wear a mask indoors if:

- You are at high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19.
- You have not been vaccinated or are not up to date on your vaccines.
- You have COVID-19 or were around someone who got the virus.
- You want an added layer of protection.
- You are in a high-risk setting (i.e., hospitals, doctor's offices, long-term care facilities, prisons, jails, homeless shelters).

When am I considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19?

The CDC uses the term fully vaccinated for people who got:

- Two shots of the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax vaccine (or three shots for kids 6 months to 4 years getting a Pfizer vaccine), or;
- One dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and;
- It has been at least 2 weeks since their most recent shot.

This includes people who:

- Got a vaccine authorized or approved by the FDA (Pfizer, Moderna, Novavax, or Johnson & Johnson).
- People who got all of their shots in a vaccine series that is listed for [emergency use by the World Health Organization, or;](#)
- People who participated in a clinical trial in the United States and got all of the recommended shots of an active COVID-19 vaccine that is listed for emergency use by the WHO (e.g., AstraZeneca) or has been independently confirmed by a data and safety monitoring board.

The CDC and NCDHHS recommend that everyone stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines. Being up to date includes:

- Getting the updated vaccine dose that targets COVID-19 variants if or when you are able.
- Getting an additional dose if you have a compromised immune system depending on the vaccine you get and your age.

[Learn more about vaccines.](#)

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpkXlOJro5I&feature=emb_logo

STAY UP TO DATE ON COVID-19 VACCINES

Ages	Pfizer	Moderna	Novavax	Johnson & Johnson
6 months to 4 years <i>Moderna 6 mo-5 years</i>	3 doses	2 doses + 1 updated dose
5 to 11 years <i>Moderna 6-11 years</i>	2 doses + 1 updated dose	2 doses + 1 updated dose
12 years and older	2 doses + 1 updated dose	2 doses + 1 updated dose	2 doses + 1 updated dose	1 dose 1 updated dose
Individuals with Compromised Immune System				
6 months to 4 years <i>Moderna 6 mo-5 years</i>	3 doses	3 doses + 1 updated dose
5 to 11 years <i>Moderna 6-11 years</i>	3 doses + 1 updated dose	3 doses + 1 updated dose
12 years and older	3 doses + 1 updated dose	3 doses + 1 updated dose	2 doses 1 updated dose	1 dose plus 1 additional original Pfizer or Moderna dose and 1 updated vaccine dose



How long will the vaccine protect me from COVID-19?

The vaccine continues to work very well in protecting people from serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. This is true even with the spread of new variants. However, it has shown less protection from getting infected with the virus.

An updated vaccine dose that protects against COVID-19 variants is recommended for most North Carolinians 6 months and older to strengthen your protection from COVID-19. Many vaccines require more than one shot for immunity, and updated shots for vaccines are common. For example, it is recommended that everyone 6 months and older get a flu shot each year. Additionally, adults should get a tetanus booster every 10 years. Everyone should get their updated COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they are able. This is especially important with the discovery of variants that spread quicker.

In most cases, you should get an updated vaccine if you are 6 months or older and it has been two months since your final dose in your initial vaccine series or any additional doses or previous boosters. Depending on your age, you can get a different brand for the updated vaccine than your original series..

Do I need an updated vaccine if I had an antibody test after getting the vaccine and antibodies were not detected?

CDC **does not** recommend antibody testing before or after getting the COVID-19 vaccine to check if a person is protected. According to the FDA, antibody tests are helpful for finding out whether a person previously had a COVID-19 infection. These tests **have not** been used to see if the vaccine worked. For more information, see the [FDA's statement on antibody testing](#).

Will the vaccine affect testing for possible COVID-19 infection?

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will not affect the most common tests used to test for the COVID-19 virus. These tests are called PCR or antigen tests. The vaccines do not affect these test results because there is no virus in the vaccines. However, vaccines can affect the results of some COVID-19 antibody tests because of the immune response to the vaccine. More details can be found from the CDC [here](#).

What should I do if I am worried that I have COVID-19 after I am vaccinated?

You should get tested and stay away from other people if you start to have symptoms of COVID-19 after being vaccinated. This is true even if you have been vaccinated. Your health care provider and local health department will report the test results to NCDHHS. This includes notification of a COVID-19 infection after being vaccinated. Getting COVID-19 is more likely if you are not vaccinated. Getting vaccinated provides strong protection from serious illness, hospitalization, and death.

If I do not get the COVID-19 vaccine, how long will I have to wear a mask?

NCDHHS no longer requires everyone to wear a mask if they are not vaccinated. However, some places may continue to require that people wear masks, like health care and long-term care settings.

NCDHHS does recommend wearing a mask if:

- You are at high risk for severe illness.
- You are unvaccinated or not up to date on your vaccines.
- You have COVID-19 or were exposed to the virus.
- You want an added layer of protection.
- You are in a high-risk setting (examples: health and long-term care facilities, correctional facility, homeless shelter).

GOVERNMENT DATA AND PRIVACY

Will I need to sign a consent form to get vaccinated?

People 18 and older can give their verbal consent. Written consent is not generally required, but some providers may require or request written consent. For information on consent for minors, see [“Do kids under 18 need their parent or guardian’s permission to get a COVID-19 vaccine?”](#)

Does the state require vaccination?

No. North Carolina has no plan to require people to be vaccinated against COVID-19. It is possible that some employers or schools will require vaccines for their employees or students. Employers may ask if you have been vaccinated but cannot require that you share any other personal medical information.

How will the state know who has been vaccinated?

North Carolina uses the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS) and the NC Immunization Registry (NCIR). These systems help vaccine providers know who has been vaccinated and with which vaccine to make sure people get the second shot of the same vaccine at the right time. It can also help make sure people get their updated vaccine at the right time. It also allows the state to manage vaccine supply. Many pharmacies, such as CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, and other grocery pharmacies do not use CVMS to give and manage vaccines. These pharmacies use their own systems. However, this information is shared with CVMS so providers and people who get the vaccine can make sure everyone gets the right shot at the right time.

What data is the state collecting, and how will it be shared?

Information about your COVID-19 vaccination is carefully managed to protect your privacy. Your vaccine information will not be shared except in accordance with state and federal law. NC CVMS is a system that gathers information for health and safety reasons. The information collected for NC CVMS is similar to the information that is required when you go to the doctor’s office or a pharmacy for a vaccine. This includes your:

- Name
- Address
- Date of birth

- The location where your vaccine was given
- When the vaccine was given
- The person who gave the vaccine
- Information about the vaccine you were given (expiration date, vaccine identifier number, etc.)
- How the vaccine was given (e.g., in the muscle of the right arm)

NC CVMS also collects information about race and ethnicity. This is needed to support efforts to make sure there is equal access to people across the state. North Carolina does not share any identifiable information to CDC. Instead, the state shares the following information with the CDC:

- The person's year of birth (not date of birth)
- The first three digits of the person's zip code if more than 20,000 people share your zip code of residence
- The date when the person's vaccine record is created.

More information about federal CDC data requirements is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/reporting/requirements/index.html>.

What data about vaccinations will be available to the public?

North Carolina has an online [public dashboard](#) to share data on vaccinations. The data in the dashboard is updated weekly on Wednesdays.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE VACCINES

How do the vaccines work?

You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccines. All of the vaccines currently approved for use in the U.S. give your body temporary instructions to make a protein. The two-shot Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use something called mRNA technology, while the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine uses DNA technology to give these instructions. The Novavax vaccine provides a more familiar type of protein-based vaccine technology that has been used for more than 30 years in shots that help prevent diseases like shingles, hepatitis B, the flu, and other illnesses. This protein safely teaches your body to make germ-fighting antibodies against the COVID-19 virus. These germ-fighting antibodies are then ready to fight off the real COVID-19 virus if it ever tries to attack you. Your body naturally breaks down everything in the vaccine. There is no COVID-19 virus in the vaccine. None of the vaccines can change your DNA.

What are the ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccines?

The COVID-19 vaccines give your body temporary instructions to fight off COVID-19. Your body naturally destroys the instructions and gets rid of them. None of the vaccine ingredients remain in your system. They do not alter any DNA in your body. The three COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States do not contain eggs, preservatives, fetal tissue, stem cells, mercury, or latex. For a full list of ingredients, please see each vaccine's Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers:

- [Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Novavax COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine](#)

Will the vaccines work against new variants of the COVID-19 virus?

An updated COVID-19 vaccine is now available for most people 6 months and older to protect against the latest COVID-19 variants. This updated dose is referred to as a bivalent vaccine as it targets both the original coronavirus strain and Omicron subvariants. This updated vaccine provides the most up-to-date protection against severe illness and can lessen the symptoms of the virus if you get sick.

All viruses change over time. These changes (known as variants) are expected. Scientists are working to learn more about new COVID-19 variants and their effects on vaccines. There continues to be good evidence that the authorized COVID-19 vaccines provide protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Getting vaccinated also helps to prevent the virus from spreading and helps keep variants from being created. A recent study showed that the vaccines work very well in preventing hospitalization and death from COVID-19, even with the more recent Omicron variant. However, breakthrough infections are likely to occur in people who are up to date with their vaccines. The updated vaccine increases how effective the vaccine is against the Omicron variant. That is why it's important that you stay up to date with all recommended COVID-19 shots.

Evidence suggests that Omicron is two to three times as contagious as the Delta variant. This makes it four to six times as contagious as the original COVID-19 virus. Data collected so far show that protection from COVID-19 vaccines may weaken quicker over time than was seen with other variants. However, vaccines are still effective at keeping you from getting very sick with COVID-19. **Protection against Omicron increases greatly after a dose of the updated vaccine.** Vaccines are needed to protect you from getting very sick during surges. People who are at greatest risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 include people who:

- Are older
- Living in long-term care facilities like nursing homes
- Have other medical conditions
- Have suppressed immune systems

People in these groups should get vaccinated and get the updated dose as soon as possible. More information can be found on the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/index.html).

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vraU5bYof34&feature=emb_logo

Are there fetal cells or fetal tissues in the vaccine?

None of the vaccines contain fetal cells or fetal tissues. Fetal cells were used in research to develop all three vaccines. Vaccines commonly use fetal cells in development. The Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax vaccines do not need fetal cells to produce the vaccines. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine uses fetal cells that were isolated over 30 years ago to produce its vaccine.

Couldn't find the answer you were looking for?

Call the CDC-INFO contact center for more information at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636 / TTY 888-232-6348). It is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends.

You can also check the following websites: [CDC Vaccines for COVID](https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/index.html), [NCDHHS COVID Vaccines](https://www.hhs.gov/ncdhhs/covid-vaccines/), [COVID.gov](https://www.covid.gov/)